An EIGHTH LETTER

Concerning the

Sacred Trinity;

Occaſioned by ſome Letters to him on that Subject.

By *JOHN WALLIS* D. D. *&c.*

SInce my publiſhing Seven Letters, and Three Sermons, concerning the Sacred Trinity; I have received, on that occaſion, ſeveral Letters from divers Perſons, (ſome known, ſome unknown,) concerning that Subject. Moſtly by way of Gratulation and Approbation of what I have done. And where ſome Expreſſions therein are not juſt the ſame with mine; they are much to the ſame purpoſe, and not at all contrary to what I undertook to maintain.

One of them (from an unknown Perſon) ſubſcribed A. B. was written (it ſeems) by a Countrey Gentleman, not a profeſſed Divine: Who though he do not pretend to be much verſed in School-Divinity; yet is, I find, not a Stranger to it. It was left for me at my Bookſellers, with an Intimation, that the Author was willing to have it Printed. And I left it again with the Bookſeller for that purpoſe; though it hath been delayed hitherto. Which (becauſe the Author did deſire it) is as followeth.

A Letter to the Reverend Doctor *Wallis* occasioned by his several Letters touching the Doctrine of the Trinity, &c.

Reverend Sir,

THIS gratitude and acknowledgement directs these lines to you. I have been so fortunate to meet with your several Letters in affirmance of the Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, &c. And cannot but confess my self not only confirmed, but much enlarged in my notions about that Doctrine by the so plain and pressing reason of your Discourses. But lest I should seem fond of my own understanding, and fancy to my self that I do comprehend more touching these matters than I indeed do, I shall humbly offer to you my method of thoughts, and submit the same to your Grave Judgment and Allowance.

THE Metaphysicians I remember teach us that one way to know the Deity is by way of Eminency. Is there any good or perfection in the Creature? Then, say they, God that is the great Author and Cause of all things, must be so in a more eminent and high Degree. The Attributes of God are Competent to man (whom he made after his own Image) in some measure, but in God they are in the highest and superlative Degree.

NOW besides these Eminences and Perfections in the Deity, there are three more particular and more transcendent Eminences, wherein and whereby God hath manifested himself to and for the good of Mankind.

GOD Almighty was pleased in his infinite Mercy to determine that Mankind should be rescued from that state of Sin, which the defection of our first Father brought us into, and be brought back into a state of Salvation. But how he should bring about and effect this great work, is out of the reach of Humane contemplation, and can no otherwise be known, than as God himself hath been pleased to reveal and discover the same to us in the Scriptures.

NOW the Scriptures intimate to us three several Manifestations of the Deity in this great work of our Salvation.

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THE first is that of a Father. That God the Father of Heaven and Earth, who created the World by his Power, and preserveth it by his Providence, so loved this World, that he sent his only begotten Son to be our Saviour and mighty Redeemer.

THE second is that of a Son. That Jesus Christ the only begotten Son of God, undertook this great work of Man's Redemption, and to that purpose came into the World, and became Man, a second Adam, *who by his holy life, and absolute and perfect obedience to the Will of God, did expiate and make atonement for the disobedience of the first.*

THE third is that of the Holy Ghost, who by his inward operations and gracious influences, doth incline and prevail with man to embrace the Redemption purchased for him upon the terms of the Gospel.

Now in respect of these three several manifestations of the Deity, there is said to be a Trinity of persons in the Unity of the Godhead, and the same God in respect of one of these manifestations of himself, is called God the Father; in respect of another is called God the Son; and in respect of the third is called God the Holy Ghost.

THAT there are these three more eminent manifestations of the Deity, and under these denominations, of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is most plain in the Scriptures.

But the great doubt is whether these be three Personalities in the Deity. And this doubt (I take it) ariseth from a misunderstanding and mistaking the true sense of the word Persona.

FOR this word Persona, *I think the Philosophers are short in their definitions of it.* Boethius *defines it to be* Naturæ Rationalis individua substantia. *This other Philosophers dislike as too scanty, because it is applicable to man only, and doth not include Spiritual Beings. And therefore They to inlarge it, and make it more comprehensive, call it* Substantia particularis, intelligens & incommunicabilis, *&c.*

But for my part I cannot but like Boethius *his definition best, and think him so far in the right, in that he makes the word* Persona *only applicable to Man; for so doubtless it is in its true and proper signification; and it is applicable to Spirits by a Metalepsis only and Transumption of the Word.*

AND herein the Philosophers are too short in their definitions of Persona, *that while they dote so much upon the word* Substance, *they forget that Accidents are a more necessary ingredient in its true definition.*

The word Persona *in relation to Man, doth not only signifie Individuality, and denote a particular or single man, but it doth imply those Qua-*

lities alſo whereby one Man differeth from another. By the word Quality here I do not mean the ſingle Predicament ſo called, but all the other Predicaments except that of Subſtance, it being thoſe whereby the Naturæ Rationalis Subſtantia *is individuated. 'Tis Quantity that differs the Perſon of taller Stature from the lower. 'Tis Quality that differs the Learned from the Unlearned Perſon. 'Tis Relation that differs the Father from the Son. 'Tis the* Ubi *or Locality that differs* John *of* Noke *from* John *at* Style. *And ſo of the other Predicaments.*

I would therefore propoſe the adding a few words to Boethius *his definition, and then I think it will be well enough. Let it then be thus,* viz. Perſona eſt Naturæ rationalis individua ſubſtantia taliter qualiter ab aliis differens. *Thus defined it relates to Man only, and ſo to one Man as he differeth from another by accidental Individuation. For though't be true that every Perſon is a ſingle ſubſtance, yet 'tis as true that they are accidents that do determine the Perſonality.*

And as the Specifick differences do conſtitute the Species, ſo Predicamental Accidents do conſtitute the Individual. Thus Rationality doth conſtitute the Species of Man, and differs it from that of the Brute. And thus Wiſdom, Fortitude, &c. do differ this particular Man from another, and make him to be this Perſon and not another. Nor can we have any certain notion of naked ſubſtances, or otherwiſe conceive of them than as they are clothed with and variegated by accidents.

To this purpoſe alſo is the true ſenſe and meaning of the Greek word ὑπόστασις, *which ſtrictly Tranſlated is in Latine* Subſiſtentia. *Now* Subſiſtentia *doth not only import the* Eſſe *of the ſubſtance, but the* Modus Eſſendi: *And what is that doth modifie ſubſtance but qualities and accidents?*

The Fundamental miſtake therefore in this great point hath been in making the word ſubſtance ſo more than neceſſary in the definition of Perſona, *and concluding from thence that there cannot be three Perſons but there muſt be three ſeveral ſubſtances. Whereas in truth there may be in the ſame one particular Man, diverſly qualified and circumſtanticated, diverſe Perſonalities. Thus in the Man* Melchiſedeck. Melchiſedeck King of Salem *may be ſaid to be one Perſon, and* Melchiſedeck the Prieſt of the moſt high God *another. So in* David, *in reſpect of his double qualification of a* King *and a* Prophet.

Thus much for what I conceive to be the true Notion of Perſona.

Now

Now to conſider this word Perſona *as it hath been applyed to the Godhead. And here I muſt ſay again, as I ſaid before, that this word* Perſona *is uſed only in a borrowed ſence, and for want of another word that might more appoſitely and fully ſignifie what is intended by it.*

God cannot properly be ſaid to be a Perſon. There are no accidents in him. All his Attributes are Eſſential to him. That Wiſdom that is Finite in Man and Accidental to him, is Infinite in God and Eſſential to him. And ſo of all the other Attributes and Perfections of the Deity, that are in an imperfect and low degree competent to Man.

In this borrowed ſence therefore it is that this word Perſona *is applyed to the Deity; and in reſpect of thoſe three Eminent manifeſtations of the Deity there are ſaid to be three Perſons in it. Not that the word* Perſon, *and diſtinction of Perſonalities in reſpect of Men doth bear a full Analogy to the difference of Perſonalities in the Deity, for in this as in all other Contemplations of God, we muſt expect to fall ſhort and not comprehend: But that the conſideration of the different Perſonalities amongſt Men may help us in ſome imperfect meaſure to conceive of that Trinity that we adore in the Unity of the Godhead.*

Object. *But here I expect an Objection, that if in reſpect of theſe three manifeſtations of the Deity there are ſaid to be three Perſons, why are there not ſaid to be more Perſons in the Godhead than three, even as many as there are Divine Attributes, for ſo many are the manifeſtations of the Deity to us.*

Anſw. *There is not ſo much reaſon to imagine more Perſonalities in the Godhead than theſe three, as that there are theſe three and no more. For although it be true that every Attribute doth import the Deity, and can be Predicated of nothing elſe but the Deity, yet every ſingle Attribute doth not (if I may ſo ſpeak) import the whole Deity. His Infinite Wiſdom doth not neceſſarily import or adminiſter to us the Notion of his Infinite Power. And ſo of the other Attributes. But theſe three ſeveral manifeſtations of the Godhead, that are called three Perſons, are ſuch wherein the whole Deity (as I may ſay) doth exert it ſelf, and appear in all its Attributes, and therefore I call them three more tranſcendent Eminences or Manifeſtations of the Deity.*

Thus I do conceive this Trinity of Perſons in the Godhead in ſome ſort intelligible, without any neceſſity of thinking that theſe three Perſons muſt be three ſeveral ſubſtances, and conſequently three Gods.

And I muſt confeſs I cannot but think this great diſpute a meer wrangling buſineſs, and a conteſt more about words than things. For at the ſame

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time that our Adversaries are so fearful of multiplying the Deity by dividing the substance, we tell them that we believe in one God only, and that these three Persons in the Godhead are but one God. So that all the dispute is whether to say there are three Persons in the Deity doth necessarily imply that there are three Substances, which we declare we do not mean nor intend by it. And for my part if they will as fairly declare that they believe these three several manifestations of the Deity, viz. of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, as held forth to us in the Scriptures, I would willingly compound with them for the word Person, and comply with them in the use of any other word they shall find out that may better or as well express what we mean by it.

I come now to the other great Objection of our Adversaries touching the Hypostatical Union. How the Divine and Humane Nature could be united in the same Person, and this Person be at the same time both God and Man, and this without multiplying or dividing the Deity, or without confining the Omnipresent to the scanty Tenement of an Humane Body. How this God-Man should be born of a Virgin by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, and Humane Nature Propagated without the Natural help of a Man. These things seem so utterly impossible to these men of great reason, that therefore they must not, cannot be; and the Scriptures themselves must rather be mistaken or false, than that can be true which they think cannot.

BUT when they argue thus from Impossibility, I wonder their Curiosity doth not question the Creation it self, how it was possible for God to make all things of nothing. And for the Hypostatical Union, methinks before they question that so strictly, they ought to give a better account than yet can be given of the Union of the Soul of Man with his Body. And when they question the being born of a Virgin, may they not as well question how the first Woman was made of the Rib of a Man: one as well as the other being supposed to come to pass by the Divine Power.

BUT because I am apt (with you) to suspect how far the Scriptures are of authority amongst these reasoning men, I will adventure to propose to them one consideration touching the Hypostatical Union to shew that it is not so inconceivable a thing to Humane Reason as they would have it.

Let them but consider the several degrees of Beings that God hath made in the World. The Trees and Plants to which he hath given Vegetation. The Brutes to which besides Vegetation, he hath given Animal life; Senses and Appetites to discern and endeavour after what is necessa-

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ry to the preſervation of their Beings. Then to ſtep further and conſider Man, to whom, beſides all theſe, God hath given a Rational Mind and Soul. And to ſtep yet further, let them conſider thoſe higher Beings the Angels, what pure Intellectual Beings they are, and what degrees of perfection God hath given them, beyond what he hath given to Man.

I ſay when we conſider theſe, what neceſſity is there of limiting and confining God Almighty here? May we not as reaſonably think, that if in his infinite Wiſdom he ſo thought fit, he might as well make a Being yet more perfect? Why is it not as conceiveable, that, (to bring about his own eternal purpoſes) he might actuate the Humane Nature by the Divine Power, and make a Man in whom even the perfections of the Deity ſhould reſide?

Is the principle of Eſſentiality and Vitality any whit divided in or from the Deity by giving Life and Being to thoſe Creatures?

Is the Eternal Mind any whit multiplied or divided by giving a Rational Soul or Mind to Man?

NOR is the Infinite and Eternal Spirit of the World multiplied or divided by creating and giving Being to thoſe Glorious Spirits the Angels.

What neceſſity then to think that the Godhead muſt be either multiplied or divided, or in any wiſe varied by acting the Divinity in the Humane Nature?

Oh rebellious Mankind, that haſt offended thy Creator; but more ungrateful, that wilt not accept his Mercy upon his own terms, and believe it exhibited in that manner that he himſelf has revealed it!

Is it not that God, whoſe Juſtice is infinite, that is offended? Is it not the ſame God, who is alſo Infinite in Goodneſs and Mercy that is appeaſed? What room for his Mercy, without derogation to his Juſtice, unleſs there be ſatisfaction? And what ſatisfaction can be competent to the offended Deity? Were Men or Angels fit to mediate, or could they make a ſatisfaction? Surely not. 'Tis his infinite mercy only that can appeaſe his Juſtice. There is Mercy with him, that he may be feared, yea Mercy rejoycing over Judgment.

NOW becauſe it is inconceivable to man how the offended Deity ſhould make a ſatisfaction to it ſelf, God Almighty is pleaſed thus far to condeſcend to the Capacity of Humane Nature as to tell us in what manner he hath done it. viz. *That he hath ſent his only begotten Son into the World to be born of a Woman to live a life of righteouſneſs for our inſtruction*

ſtruction and example, and to dye the Death of Sinners to ſatisfie for our defection. And further, that our Original Taint might not prevail over and miſguide us into actual tranſgreſſions, he hath ſent his Holy Spirit amongſt us to lead us into the ways of Truth and Righteouſneſs. This he was pleaſed to promiſe after the Fall, by his Prophets in the times of the Old Teſtament, and has now performed it to us in the times of the New.

Now, is it fit for us to object againſt this manifeſtation of his Mercy to us, and glorious contrivance of our Redemption, becauſe we cannot comprehend the myſtery of it? That ſurely was ne're meant to be within our fathom.

In the days of the Old Teſtament when God was pleaſed to command the adoration and duty of his People, he manifeſted himſelf to them under ſeveral appellations, whereby he put them in mind of his Mercies to them and their duty to him. I am (ſays he) the God of Abraham, *the God of* Iſaac, *and the God of* Jacob. *And ſo in the Prologue to the Decalogue — I am the Lord thy God which brought thee out of the Land of* Egypt, *out of the Houſe of Bondage,* &c. *Intimating thereby to them the great mercies he had ſhewn in his Miraculous preſervation of the Patriarchs, and People of* Iſreal.

So now in the days of the New Teſtament God Almighty has been pleaſed to manifeſt himſelf to us under other denominations and appellations, viz. *thoſe of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghoſt; intimating thereby to us in what manner he hath made good his promiſed Mercy, and brought about the great work of our Redemption, and that under thoſe appellations and manifeſtations of himſelf he will now be worſhipped in the times of the Goſpel.*

*But for us to underſtand the great myſteries of our Salvation in this manner offered unto us, (*viz. *That the Trinity in the Unity of the Godhead, and that of the Incarnation of our Bleſſed Saviour,* &c.*) was certainly never intended by God Almighty. And ſhall we doubt what God himſelf tells us becauſe we cannot comprehend it?*

When God ſaid to the People of Iſrael; *I am the Lord thy God which brought thee out of the Land of* Egypt, *&c. had it been fit for them to have enquired how he brought them out of* Egypt, *and to have ravelled into all the Miracles he wrought for that purpoſe, and to have brought them to the touch of their underſtandings, and to have doubted the truth there-*

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of, or the Power of God that did them, because they could not reconcile them to their own reason?

Yet this ill certainly do they use God Almighty, who will doubt the Manner of our Salvation, because they cannot understand the Mystery.

Alas, vain Men, that will not believe what God himself has Reveal'd, because it will not bear the Test of their weak reason! Do they think the Wisdom and Power of the Almighty are to be bounded by the Scanty Limits of their Understanding? That were for what is Finite to comprehend Infinity. God were not God if that were so. And these very Men, who value themselves so much upon their Reason, that they think they ought to understand the very Arcana *of Heaven, would, I doubt not, be ready enough by the same strength of Reasoning, to disown that Deity that they could comprehend.*

Thus I have presumed (Reverend Sir) to trouble you with this Draught of my Rude Notions about this matter, which I hope you will excuse, they coming from a private Countrey-Gentleman, unread in Polemick Divinity, and particularly in this Dispute, and in whom these thoughts were occasioned by the Perusal of your late Papers, I am, Sir,

May 28th,
1691.

Yours most Humbly,

A. B.

THIS Letter being for ſubſtance, much to the ſame purpoſe with what I had undertaken to maintain; and the expreſſions not much different, and in nothing contrary to it: I ſhall not detain the Reader with any long diſcourſe upon it; becauſe it ſpeaks ſufficiently for it ſelf.

It hath been ſuggeſted to me by another *Anonymous*; That, we knowing ſo little of the Infinite Divine Nature, there may poſſibly be greater diſtinction between the *Three* (which we uſe to call) *Hypoſtaſes*, or *Perſons*, than (what he calls) the *Civil or Relative* acceptation of the word *Perſon*; (and we may as well Prejudice the *Truth*, by affirming *too little*, as by affirming *too much*.) And it is very true; there may be, for ought we know, (and perhaps there is) *more* than ſo, (nor have I any where denyed it:) But, how *much* that *more* is, we cannot tell. Sure we are, *not* ſo as to be *three Gods* (or more Gods than one:) And I chooſe to ſay (with St. *Auſtin*) That *theſe Three are One Spirit* (as we ſay, *they are One God*,) *not Three Spirits*. The true *ancient* import of the Word *Perſon* (when firſt applied to the Trinity) implies no more than as I explained it: Which was a full Anſwer to the Anti-trinitarians *Popular* Argument (from the *modern* groſs acceptation of the Word *Perſon* in *Engliſh*,) as if *three Divine Perſons*, muſt needs be *three Gods*, becauſe *three Perſons* amongſt *Men* doth ſometimes (not always, nor did it anciently ſo,) imply *three Men*. And, when we ſay, theſe *three Perſons* are but *one God*; 'tis manifeſt that we uſe this *Metaphor* of *Perſons* (when applyed to *God*,) as borrowed from *that* ſenſe of the Word *Perſon*, wherein the ſame *Man* may ſuſtain divers *Perſons*, or *divers Perſons* be the *ſame Man*. I have ſeen, more than once, an Addreſs From *Edward Earl of Clarendon, Chancellor of the Univerſity of Oxford*, To *Edward Earl of Clarendon Lord High Chancellor of England*, (in a Claim of Privilege, to remove a Cauſe from the Court of *Chancery*, to that of the *Univerſity*.) Yet theſe *two Chancellors* were not *two Men*, nor *two Earls of Clarendon*; but one and the ſame, ſuſtaining *two Perſons*, (one addreſſing to the other.) And if this do ſufficiently anſwer that *Popular Cavil*; 'tis as much as 'twas brought for. If it do otherwiſe appear, that the diſtinction between theſe Three Divine

Perſons

Perſons be more than ſo; (but yet more God's than One;) that may well enough be, though this *Metaphor* do not neceſſarily imply ſo much. 'Tis certain, that *three Perſons*, neither according to the true import of the words, nor according to the intent of thoſe who ſo ſpeak, doth not imply *three Gods*: But *Three Perſons which are One God*, or *One God in Three Perſons*.

I have alſo a Third Letter from *W. J.* much to the ſame purpoſe with what he had Written in his two former. (And therefore I do not think it needful to inſert it here; nor do I ſee that he deſires it.) *It is*, he tells me, *to take his leave of me*, as not meaning to *give me any farther trouble in this kind*. 'Tis full of divers expreſſions of Reſpect, Thanks, and Approbation; And he doth inſiſt (as in his two former he had done) upon theſe two things; *Not to be too poſitive* (in theſe matters) *beyond what the Scripture tells us*; And, *Not to lay the like ſtreſs upon our Argumentations from thence, as on what we find there*. In both which (as before I did) I do fully agree with him. Becauſe, in matters of pure Revelation, we know no more than what is Revealed: And, becauſe 'tis very ſure, that (even in Natural things) Men do oft miſtake in their Argumentations, from Principles which they think to be True and Clear; (Elſe it could not be that divers Men, from the ſame Principles, ſhould infer contrary Concluſions:) And becauſe we find it difficult, ſometimes, to reconcile ſome things, which yet we cannot well deny to be true. And, if it be ſo, even in Natural things: much more may it be ſo in things of an Infinite Nature. So that herein (I think) He and I do not diſagree.

Yet would I not infer from hence (nor doth he) that we muſt therefore be Scepticks in *All things*, becauſe it is poſſible that in *Some things* we may *miſtake*. For it is one thing *to be Infallible*; another thing *not to Err*. A Man who is not Infallible, may yet Argue Truly; and where he doth ſo, his Argument is Concluſive. And we may accordingly reſt in it, and inſiſt upon it, more or leſs, according to the degree of Evidence. For things equally True, are not always equally Evident; nor equally Neceſſary to be known. Where the Evidence is not clear (and the matter not needful for us to know) we are not to be too Poſitive in our Determinations, (but rather be content to be ignorant farther than God

is pleaſed to reveal :) But where it is, (and the things be of Moment) we muſt *hold faſt that which is true*, and not ſuffer our ſelves to be eaſily wheedled out of it.

Which, I ſuppoſe, is his Opinion as well as mine. For he ſeems to interpoſe this Caution (particularly) as to that Hypotheſis; to which (as before he had done) he doth ſuggeſt ſome new Difficulties: But, wherein I am not concerned. That God is *Trin-unus*, he doth profeſs. And the word *Perſon* he doth not diſlike. But thinks it ſafe not to be too Poſitive in determining preciſely how great that Diſtinction of Perſons is. In all which, I do concur with him.

Now as to the Word *Perſon* (though I am not fond of Words, where the Senſe is agreed;) I am not willing to quit it, becauſe I do not know a better to put in the Room of it: And becauſe, if we quit the word, which the Church hath with good reaſon made uſe of, for ſo many Hundred years (without any juſt exception made to it :) thoſe *Anti-trinitarians*, who would have us quit the Word, will pretend, that, in ſo doing, we quit the Doctrine too.

That we do not, by *Perſon* (when applyed to the Sacred Trinity) underſtand *ſuch* a Perſon, as when applyed to *Men*; and, that by Three *Divine* Perſons, we do not mean Three *Gods*: hath been ſo often ſaid, and ſo fully, by thoſe who believe the *Trinity*; that thoſe who cavil at it, cannot but know it: But by *Perſon* in the Deity, we mean only what bears ſome Analogy, with what amongſt Men is ſaid of ſeveral Perſons (even without being ſo many ſeveral Men; which the true ſenſe of the word Perſon doth not import, as hath been often ſhewed:) as do the words, *Beget, Begotten, Sending, Proceeding* or *Going-forth*, and many more; which all are Metaphorical Expreſſions, taken from what amongſt Men is wont to be ſaid of Perſons, (For, of whom, but Perſons, are ſuch expreſſions uſed?) And they who uſe to cavil at it, may as well do it when we talk of the *Foot* of a Stool, the *Arm* of a Chair, or the *Head* of a Staff; And perſwade us, that when we ſo ſpeak, we do believe a *Stool*, a *Chair*, a *Staff*, to have *Life* and *Senſe*, becauſe a Foot, an Arm, a Head (properly taken) have ſo.

And they may as well cavil at the word *Sacrament* (which is a Name that we have given to that of Baptiſm and the Lord's Supper;) *Attributes*, (which is a term we give to ſome of the Divine Perfections:) *Creed*, (by which we mean an Abſtract of ſome Principal things that we Believe:) And a great many ſuch other words that we find occaſion to make uſe of: Whereof yet there is no danger, when it is defined and determined what by ſuch word, in ſuch diſcourſe, we mean; even though, in ſome Other diſcourſes, ſuch word may ſignifie otherwiſe. 'Tis well known, that a *Cone* in *Euclide* doth not ſignifie juſt the ſame as in *Apollonius*; nor a *Triangle* in *Euclide*, juſt the ſame as in *Theodoſius*, and others, who Write of Sphericks: But when we meet with theſe words in *Euclide*, we muſt there underſtand them as they are defin'd by *Euclide*; and when in others, ſo as they are defin'd by thoſe others. And ſo when we ſpeak of Perſons in the Deity, we muſt be ſo underſtood as we there define: that is, for ſomewhat Analogous, but not juſt the ſame, with what is meant by it, when applyed to Men; and, particularly, *not* ſo diſtinct as to be *three Gods*.

And, for the ſame Reaſons, I am not willing to part with the *Athanaſian Creed*; leſt thoſe who would have us ſo do, ſhould then ſay, We have parted with the Doctrine alſo. They, upon pretence, that ſome expreſſions in it, though True, are not abſolutely Fundamental; would fain wheedle us out of all. They might as well ſay, that, becauſe ſome words might be ſpared in what we call the *Apoſtolick* Creed, or *Nicene* Creed; or ſome other words put in; therefore thoſe Creeds ſhould be laid aſide alſo. And when they quarrel with the *Preface* of it, (*Whoever would be ſaved, ought to hold the Catholick Faith; and the Catholick Faith is this*;) as if it were intended thereby, that every Syllable in it were ſo Fundamental, as without knowing whereof, a Man could not be ſaved: (which no Man can reaſonably think to be ſo meant by the Penners of it; ſince that Thouſands were ſaved (even in their opinion) before that was Penned; and others ſince, that never heard of it;) is mere Cavilling. For no more can reaſonably be thought intended by it, but that this is found Doctrine, which, *for the Subſtance* of it, ought to be believed by thoſe who would be ſaved: Like as if I ſhould ſay, *Who ever would be ſaved, ought to believe the Word of God; and this is the Word of God*, (pointing to our Bible;)

Bible ;) no Man (who is not mad) would think my meaning to be, That no Man could be ſaved who did not know that one of *Job*'s Daughters was Named *Jemimah* ; or that *Zeruiah* was *Mother* (not *Father*) to thoſe who are called *the Sons of Zeruiah.*

As to that Queſtion (which I meet with in ſome of the Letters) *Why juſt Three Perſons, and no more:* The *Anſwer* is ſhort and eaſie ; Becauſe the Scripture tells us of *Three*, but of *no more.* (And, had not the Scripture told it us, we had not known of theſe Three.) We are *Baptized* into the Name of (and therefore into the Faith of) *the Father, Son and Holy Ghoſt* ; (as if this were the *Firſt Chriſtian Creed.*) We are told, *There are Three that bear record in Heaven* ; and, *theſe Three are One:* (not, that there are more ſuch than Three :) And to *theſe Three* (ſomewhats) we give the Name of *Perſons* ; meaning, by the Word *Perſons*, theſe *Three.* And if by *Perſons* in the Deity we mean but theſe *Three* ; then there are but *Three* in the Deity whom we call *Perſons* ; or, whom we mean by that Name.

There is another Ingenious Perſon (a ſtranger to me) who hath Written to me divers Letters on this occaſion, (full of Gratulation, Approbation and Applauſe :) but in one of them he moves a Queſtion concerning a paſſage in one of mine ; where I ſay, *We have no Notions in our Mind, other than what we derive, Mediately or Immediately, from Senſible Impreſſions of Finite Corporeal Beings :* And tells me, *That it ſeems to him, that the Notion of ONE INFINITE ESSENCE ſhould be excepted.* And that he hath formerly *Vindicated* Des Cartes *againſt Mr.* Hobs, who had affirmed, *That there is no Conception in a Man's Mind, which hath not at firſt totally, or by parts, been begotten upon the Organs of Sence :* and again, *That a Man can have no Thought repreſenting any thing not ſubject to Senſe.*

But, in a following Letter, he declares himſelf *fully ſatisfied*, (and that *my Sentiments do not really differ from his,*) when I had ſent him this Anſwer, *viz.*

"As to what you ſay of my affirming, that *we have no Notions in* "*our Mind, other than what we derive, mediately or immediately,*

"*from*

" *from ſenſible Impreſſions of Finite Corporeal Beings:* When you con-
" ſider it again, I believe you will be of my Mind. If you can
" ſuppoſe a Man in ſuch circumſtances, as never to have *Seen*, or
" *Heard*, or *Felt* any thing: I doubt whether he would have any
" Thoughts of God, more than an Embryo yet unborn, (who
" hath the *ſame Soul*, that he will after have; but hath, I doubt,
" as yet, no Notions of a God.) Sure I am that we attain it by
" other Steps. *The Heavens declare the Glory of God*: But not with-
" out being *Seen*, or at leaſt *Heard* of, or ſome way *made known*
" to us by *Senſible Impreſſions. The Inviſible things of him (even his*
" *Eternal Power and Godhead) are clearly ſeen*; but it is *by the Crea-*
" *tion of the World; being underſtood by the things that are made.* But
" if we neither *See*, nor *Hear of*, nor have any *Notion* of the *things*
" *that are made*; how ſhall we *thence* derive the *Notion* of a *God?*
" and there muſt be many Notions, *antecedent* to that of *One Infi-*
" *nite Eſſence*, (which muſt be derived from *ſenſible Impreſſions* of
" *Corporeal* Beings.) We muſt have the *Notion* or *Conception* of
" *Ens*, *Eſſe*, *Finis*, *Finitum*, *Non-finitum*, *Unum*, *Non-nullum*,
" *Non-multa*; before we can have the *Notion* of *One Infinite Eſſence.*
" And thoſe *Antecedent Notions*, I think, we do derive (mediately
" or immediately) from what we See, Hear, Feel, or ſome way
" apprehend by the help of our *Senſes.* As to *Des Cartes*;
" there muſt be a great many *Notions*, or *ſimple Apprehenſi-*
" *ons*, which he muſt *preſume*, before he can come to the
" *Complex Notion* of *Deus Eſt.* And a great many *Illative Notions*
" (from Natural Logick) before he can argue, *Cogito, ergo ſum.*
" He muſt at leaſt have a *Notion*, or *ſimple Apprehenſion*, of what is
" meant by *Cogito*, and of what is meant by *Sum*, and of what by *Ego:*
" And then a *Complex Notion*, that *what is not, cannot Think:* And
" then this *Illative Notion* (from Natural Logick.) But, *I Think,*
" Therefore *I am.* And, I doubt, he cannot come at all this, with-
" out ſome uſe of his *Senſes.* And, even after all, it ſeems to me,
" that *to Be* is a Notion more ſimple (and therefore antecedent)
" than *to Think*; and therefore ſooner to be apprehended by it
" ſelf, than by conſequence from that. But it is not now my bu-
" ſineſs to Diſpute againſt *Des Cartes.* Onely to ſhew, that *Sanſi-*
" *tive* Notions are ſubſervient to our Notions of a God; and,

" from

" from Theſe, our Underſtandings do, by ſteps, aſcend to " Theſe.

Upon this Anſwer, he owns *my Sentiments to be the ſame with his*, &c. that *(in a Natural way) the Humane Intellect hath no Operation, but what is Occaſioned, or Suggeſted by Senſible Objects.* But he thinks, I perceive, (and ſo do I,) that from theſe Notions occaſioned or ſuggeſted by Senſible Objects, our Intellect, or Reaſon improved, may aſcend, by ſteps, to a Diſcovery of ſomething concerning God, which, in Corporeal Objects it cannot find; In which we both agree.

Now the beſt means we have for the forming of ſuch Notions concerning God, is chiefly by one of theſe two ways; that of *Eminency*, and that of *Negation*. Whatever of Good, or Excellency, we find in the Creature, we conclude that in God (who is the fountain of all Excellency) there is ſomewhat Analogous thereunto, but *much more* Eminent. And whatever of Imperfection we find in the Creature, we conclude, that in God (who is Infinitely Perfect) there is nothing of this Imperfection. And, from both, we conceive a Notion of ſomewhat in God, which is *more Great* than is poſſible for us fully to comprehend: But, what that ſomewhat is, we cannot fully underſtand. Now, theſe being the Steps, by which we *form* theſe Notions; we know no better way to *expreſs* theſe Conceptions, than by Metaphors taken from ſuch Objects, from whence theſe Notions take their Riſe, or ſome ſuch *Figurative* Expreſſions. (And it was with this Proſpect that I mention'd that Obſervation.) And, in the ſame way, God is pleaſed (in Scripture) to expreſs himſelf to us; by ſomewhat Analogous (not juſt the ſame) with what we meet with in the Creature; As when it ſpeaks of God's *Eyes, Ears, Hands, Feet*, &c. of his *Seeing, Hearing, Striking, Going*, &c. So when the *Father* is ſaid to *Beget*; the *Son* to be *Begotten*; and both theſe to *ſend out*, and the *Holy Ghoſt* to *Proceed*, or *Go forth* from them. All which expreſſions are ſuch, as we commonly apply to what we call *Perſons*. And in what ſenſe thoſe are to be underſtood concerning God; in ſuch ſenſe they are fitly called three *Perſons*. And thoſe who in ſuch ſenſe cavil at the word *Perſon*; would no doubt (if there were not ſomewhat elſe in the Wind) as well cavil at thoſe other

other words. But becauſe, ſo to do, were directly to affront the Scripture (whoſe words they are) they do not think fit ſo to ſpeak out, whatever they think. When Chriſt ſaith, of himſelf and the Father, *John* 16. 28. *I Came forth from the Father, and am Come into the World; again, I Leave the World, and Go to the Father*: Of Himſelf and the Holy Ghoſt, *ver.* 7, 8. *If I Go not away, the Comforter will not Come unto you; but if I Depart, I will Send Him unto you; and when He is Come, He will Reprove the World*, &c. Of himſelf and the other two, *John* 14. 26. and 15. 26. *The Comforter which is the Holy Ghoſt, whom the Father will Send in My Name, He ſhall Teach you all things, and Bring all things to your Remembrance whatſoever I have Said unto you.* And again, *When the Comforter is Come, whom I will Send you From the Father, even the Spirit of Truth which Proceedeth from the Father, He ſhall Teſtifie of Me*: What could be ſaid, as of Three *Perſons*, more diſtinctly? And if the Scripture ſpeak of them as *Three Perſons*; why ſhould we ſcruple to call them ſo? But theſe *Three Perſons* are but *One God.* Οἱ τρεῖς ἓν εἰσι. Theſe *Three* are *One*; *Unum* (not *unus*) *One Thing*, 1 *John* 5. 7. And *John* 10. 30. *I and the Father are One*; ἓν ἐσμεν, (*unum ſumus*) we are One and the ſame Thing; and therefore *One God.* And, that there is *no other God but One*, is known to be ſo often ſaid that I need not repeat it.

But 'tis not ſo much the word *Perſon*, as the *Deity of Chriſt*, which theſe Men are offended at; and all their Cavils at the word *Perſon*, (and the *Athanaſian Creed*,) are but to undermine our Saviours *Deity*. Of this I have ſaid enough elſewhere, and need not here repeat it. *The LORD our God is One LORD, Deut.* 6. 4. That is, The Lord God of *Iſrael* is One Lord; or *Jehovah* the God of *Iſrael* is One *Jehovah*. There are not more *Jehovah*'s than One: And this One *Jehovah* is *the Lord God of* Iſrael. And *Iſa.* 45. 3, 5. *I the LORD* (Jehovah) *am the God of* Iſrael: *I am the LORD* (Jehovah) *and there is none elſe. There is no God beſide Me*: (No God beſide the Lord God of *Iſrael.*) So in 2 *Kings* 19. 15. and many other places to the ſame purpoſe. Now our *Chriſt*, is this *Lord God of* Iſrael, *Luke* 1. 16, 17. *Many of the Children of* Iſrael *ſhall He* (*John* the Baptiſt) *turn to the Lord THEIR God*, (to the Lord God of *Iſrael*;) *and he* (*John Baptiſt*) *ſhall go before Him*, (this Lord God of *Iſrael*) *in the Spirit and Power of* Elias. Now no Man

doubts but that it is our Christ, whose *Fore-runner John Baptist* was; and before whom he was to *go in the Spirit and Power of* Elias. Therefore our *Christ* is this *Lord God of* Israel: This *One* JEHOVAH.

'Tis true that the Greek *Septuagint*'s Translation of the Old Testament doth not retain that word, but doth every where wave the word *Jehovah*, and puts ὁ κύριος instead of it. And accordingly, the New Testament (which mostly follows the Language of that, the only Greek Translation then in use) doth so too. But ὁ κύριος (which they substitute for *Jehovah*) is so oft applied to Christ (even in those places cited out of the Old Testament wherein *Jehovah* is used) that none can be ignorant of it.

And though we have not there the word *Jehovah*, yet we have as full a Periphrasis of it as can be desired. 'Tis well known (and owned by all) that the two Proper Names of God, *Jah* and *Jehovah*, are derivatives from the Verb *Hajah* or *Havah* which signifieth *to Be*, (which whether we take for one and the same Root, or Two Roots of one and the same signification, is not material; the Letter *Jod* and *Vau* in Hebrew being so oft used promiscuously, or one changed for the other:) And therefore the Noun Verbal must needs import *a Being*. And it hath been further observed long since by Hebricians, that the Name *Jehovah* hath moreover the peculiar Characteristicks of the Three *Times*, (past, present, and future,) *Je* the Characteristick of the *Future* Tense; *Ho*, of the Present Tense or Participle; and *Va* of the Preter Tense, (which I did forbear to mention formerly, lest they should throw it off as a Criticism; till I had a fresh Voucher for it, so good as Dr. *Pocock* in his late Commentary on *Joel*, Chap. 1. 19.). And we have all this in that Character of God (indefinitely) *Rev.* 1. 4. ἀπὸ ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, *from that Being, who Is and Hath been, and Shall be for the time to come.* And it is particularly applied to Christ, at *ver.* 8. Ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ Α καὶ τὸ Ω, λέγει ὁ κύριος ὁ θεὸς, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, ὁ παντοκράτωρ. *I am* Alpha *and* Omega, *saith the Lord God* (Jehovah Elohim) *which Is, which Was, and which is to Come, the Almighty.* Which is a full Account of the Name *Jehovah* (here Translated, as elsewhere, by ὁ κύριος) with a discant upon it, importing his *Being*, with the three diversities of *Times*, (*past, present, and future,*) and his *Omnipotence* superadded. *That*

Being

Being which now Is, which ever Was, and which ever Shall be, the Lord God, Almighty. (So *Rev.* 4. 8. and *Rev.* 11. 17.) And in *Rev.* 16. 5. ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ὁσιος (so *Beza*, and so Dr. *Pocock* reads it, and so ours Translate it.) And much to the same purpose is that *Rev.* 1. 11, 17, 18. *Rev.* 2. 8. (and elsewhere) *I am* Alpha *and* Omega, *the beginning and the end, the first and the last; he that liveth and was dead, and behold I live for evermore.* So *Rev.* 4. 9, 11. *Rev.* 5. 12, 13, 14 *Who liveth for ever and ever.* Which fully answers that Title, *The Living God*, whereby the *True God* doth so oft distinguish himself from other Gods; as *Jer.* 10. 10. and elsewhere frequently. But I have said so much formerly to this point, that I shall now add no more.

I had almost forgotten one piece, (wherein I find my self mentioned) Intituled, *A Suit for forbearance*, &c. It aims chiefly at two things. One is against *urging* (*on others*) *too strict an Union, wherein Christianity, as delivered by our Lord and his Apostles, hath left a Latitude and Simplicity:* But *herein* I think, he hath no cause to blame me (nor do I see that he doth.) He doth not find me to trouble him with *cramping Scholastick Terms.* I know not how I could speak more tenderly than to say *these Three* are three *Somewhats*, (not three *Nothings*;) and if he please to sport himself with that, he may. And, that 'tis convenient, to these *Somewhats*, to give a Name; and, that I know no better Name than *Persons*; And, therefore, that we may still say (as we were wont to do) *three Persons and one God*; even though by *Person*, I do not require Men to fancy just *such* a Person, as what we so call amongst Men. Like as by *Father*, *Son*, *Beget*, &c. I do not understand (in God) *just such* as what these words signifie amongst Men. And I do not know how he could wish me to speak more tenderly, or more agreeing to the *Christian Simplicity, wherein it is delivered by our Lord and his Apostles.*

The other is; He thinks it not Adviseable in things *sufficiently setled by just Authority* (*as is that of the Trinity*) *to revive a Controversie long since determined, and draw the Disputations Saw: Because, to litigate about a Fundamental, is to turn it into a Controversie.* And herein, I am so much of his Mind, that I would not have advised to start the Controversie, about what we have been *in quiet possession of*, for so long a time. And I am ready to own, That it is an Art

of our Adverſaries the *Papiſts*, to perſwade the World that we have no better ground for the Doctrine of the *Trinity*, than they have for *Tranſubſtantiation*; (for they care not what they overthrow, if thereby they may advance their own ends:) And, That *Atheiſtical and Irreligious Men* will be glad of any opportunity to Ridicule Religion.

But if others will make it their buſineſs to *run down Religion*; and profeſs to the World, there is nothing but *Authority to define it* (which they deſpiſe;) and no *Reaſon* or *Scripture* for it, more than for *Tranſubſtantiation*: I think we are not obliged to ſtand (all of us) ſo ſilent, as if we had nothing to ſay for it, or yielded up the cauſe. There is a middle way (for the promoting what he calls *a Purer and more Scriptural Divinity,*) between a rigorous impoſing all the *Scholaſtick Cramping Terms*; and, a giving up the Cauſe. A modeſt defence of what the Scripture teacheth us, (without Excurſions into a rigorous preſſing of Extravagant Niceties of our own Inventions) may be of good ſubſerviency, to ſhew, that the Doctrines of our *Religion* are not inconſiſtent with *right Reaſon.*

What he tells us of ſome body who had been heretofore *Maſter of the Temple*, that did expreſs himſelf to this purpoſe, *The Subſtance of God, with this Property, To be of none, doth make the Perſon of the Father; The very ſelf ſame Subſtance in number, with this Property, To be of the Father, maketh the Perſon of the Son. The ſame Subſtance having added to it the Property of Proceeding from the other Two, maketh the Perſon of the Holy Ghoſt. So that, in every Perſon, there is implyed, both the Subſtance of God, which is One, and alſo that Property which cauſeth the ſame Perſon really and truely to differ from the other Two.* This, I ſay, would paſs with me well enough. And if he pleaſe ſo to expreſs himſelf, I ſhould not quarel with it.

Again; If I ſhould expreſs it thus; That God conſidered as the Original or Fountain of *Being* (who himſelf *Is* and gives *Being* to all things elſe) may be called *God the Father*, (or *The God and Father of all*:) And the ſame God, as the Fountain of *Wiſdom* or *Knowledge*; be called *God the Son*, (ὁ λόγος, the *Word, Wiſdom* or *Reaſon*; *The true Light, that lighteth every Man that cometh into the World,*) *Gods Wiſdom* reſulting from his *Eſſence* or *Being*: And the ſame God, as the Fountain of *Power, Might* or *Action*; be called

God

God the Holy Ghoſt; (Gods power of *Acting*, proceeding from his *Eſſence* and *Wiſdom* alſo :) And this *Eternal*, *All-wiſe*, and *Almighty* God, is *One God* : Perhaps he would not much miſlike this. Or, if he ſhould ; I would not quarel with him on that account ; or be Poſitive that it muſt juſt be ſo. We know that Chriſt is called *the Wiſdom of God* ; the *Son of God* ; the *Son of the Higheſt* : And the *Holy Ghoſt* is called the *Power of the Higheſt*. And we know that, amongſt our ſelves, *Knowledge* reſults from the *Eſſence* of our Soul ; and *Action* proceeds from *Both*. 'Tis ſaid alſo, that *in Him we Live, and Move, and have our Being.* (From God we have our *Being*, our Rational *Life*, and our *Motion* : In whoſe *Image* and *Likeneſs* we are Created.) Yet would I not be poſitive (much leſs would I require every one to be of that Opinion) that the Perſonalities in God muſt needs be Theſe. I am content to reſt here, That Theſe *Three*, Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt (whatever Name you call them by) *differ in ſomewhat* (more than what we commonly call the Divine Attributes) *yet not ſo as to be Three Gods* (or more Gods than One ;) *but are One and the ſame God.* And ſo far we be ſafe. Nor is there any danger (that I can ſee) in giving the Name of *Perſons* to theſe *Three* : Nor know I a fitter Name to give them.

And this, I think, is as much as need be ſaid, as to all thoſe Letters, which, on this Occaſion, have come to my Hand, ſince the Publiſhing of thoſe already Printed. There being nothing in all theſe which is contrary to what I therein undertook to defend. (Nor ſhould I have ſaid thus much, if the Author of the Letter here inſerted had not deſired to have it Publiſhed.) And now I hope to trouble the Preſs no more upon this Occaſion.

Novemb. 23.
1691.

Yours,

John Wallis.

F I N I S.